

The Parchment

March 2016

Monthly Newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC

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FCCStJoseph
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Greetings from Dr. Bob

Easter is coming! The resurrection! So let's tackle something worthy of defeating death and embracing God's gift of life. How about the Pope and Donald Trump, without beating up on either. I'm game.

The campaign has been fast, furious and ever changing, so you're excused if you can't remember this from a couple of weeks ago. The Pope was in a plane returning from Mexico and, in debriefing the week, he said in reference to DT and our problem with immigration that "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian."

The outcry went up: *The Pope is inserting himself into the Republican presidential campaign. How dare the Pope comment on someone's faith! How judgmental! What about that massive wall around Vatican City?*

So, the Pope and any other person who earns their keep on this earth as a Christian leader needs to stay silent about anything

March Highlights

3.4-6

Middle High Youth Winter Retreat

3.6

10:25 a.m. Worship with Communion
4:00 p.m. AGO Hymn Festival

3.14

Salam Neighbor Film Screening

3.20

10:25 a.m. – Palm Sunday

3.24

6:30 p.m. – Maundy Thursday Service

3.25

12:15 p.m. – Good Friday Service

3.27

10:25 a.m. Easter Sunday

International Day of Happiness March 20

The International Day of Happiness is observed on March 20 (also the first day of spring this year; coincidence?). Jesus said we'll be happy (or "blessed") when we're meek, merciful, pure and so on (see his Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12). In other words, happiness results from putting others' needs above our own.

Research confirms that helping others boosts people's self-esteem, forges strong friendships, offers a sense of belonging and purpose, decreases stress, increases gratitude and sparks others to "pay it forward." In fact, University of Texas researchers found that the "activism cure" is a great way to overcome bouts of sadness. So get helping – and get happy!

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and everything that might be construed as political. I don't think so. I don't like many things I have heard in video recordings that Donald Trump said. Ditto for T Cruz, M Rubio, and H Clinton. The Pope was asked a question and he essentially said that a follower of Jesus Christ is concerned with reconciliation, not separation. Some immediately responded that the immigration issue is much more complex than that. Hardly. Read just one book on the Roman world of Jesus Christ and you'll never believe that again. His world was incomparably complex. His country was occupied, ruled and dominated by an oppressive empire. The Good News he brought was not to make the country great again. It was that God would make each of us great again, and together we could be a great people again, if we followed in his footsteps.

It was not a promise of economic prosperity and total safety from insiders or outsiders. It was a promise of total and complete liberation of the soul and total and complete dedication to love God with your entire being and love thy neighbor as thyself. And he showed us that if we took it seriously, it just might kill us. Like it killed him.

Politicians open the door to impropriety when they throw out a "God bless America" as glibly as they throw out or cover up distortions and lies in order to win an election. They drag God into the picture but it is almost always a God of their own definition and description. The real Jesus is rarely invited.

None of us has anything more than an educated guess about who our next President will be. But we have an obligation to discuss the character of the candidates. It would be great if we could have those discussions without getting angry. In other words, if we could build bridges instead of walls. Referring to how Jesus brought Jews and Gentiles together, St. Paul wrote:

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Here's to a non-hostile conversation about what it means to have a Christ-like discussion of our differences and desires. For Christ's sake. For Easter and beyond.

Dr. Bob



Middle High Youth Retreat

March 4, 5, & 6 at SpringHill! Camp

Please pray for our Middle High Youth as they go on Winter Retreat with our Youth Leader Michael Milnickel. During the first weekend in March, eight of our middle high youth are attending Springhill camp with Beth Christy, Mark Nisbet, Claire Norland, and Jim Schlipp as parent volunteers. We wish them a wonderful time and a safe journey.

Men's Ministry

Saturday March 12 & 26

Breakfast is served at 8:00 and a discussion begins at 8:20 and ends by 9:30 a.m. Come and contribute your thoughts and solutions.

Topics to consider:

- Similarities between Nazi Germany's fall from grace and the beginning of our fall.
- Government suppression is defined as the quest of "equality" and "fairness."
- Should Christmas-themed programs, music, decorations, and Merry Christmas be excluded from our public schools?
- Is there a concerted effort to remove Christian influences from our government, laws, education system and the workplace?

Daylight Saving Time Begins

Sunday March 13, 2:00 a.m.

Remember to move your clocks ahead one hour on Saturday night before bedtime so you won't be late for worship on Sunday, March 13. Spring is coming!

Calling All Bakers

Betty Westmaas

We need volunteers to provide cookies for Fellowship Hour on the following dates: April 3, 17 & 24. If you would like to provide treats, call Betty Westmaas at 982-8556.

Mary Martha Circle

Tuesday, March 8 at 1:00 p.m.

This meeting will be the annual book exchange in the Greeting Room.

Women's Fellowship Council

Wednesday, March 16 at 9:30 a.m.

All women of the church are welcome and invited to join us in the Greeting Room.

Mary Preston Guild

Wednesday March 9 at 1:00 p.m.

We meet in the Gathering Room.

Women's Bible Study

Thursdays, 1:30 p.m.

Come join our Women's Bible Study on Thursdays at 1:30 p.m. We will be meeting in the Gathering Room. Bring a Bible. All women are welcome to attend.

Eye-witness. *Noun:* a person who has personally seen something happen and so can give a first-hand description of it.
Synonyms: witness, bystander, spectator, beholder. Come learn with us! Questions: contact Patty Nordberg at 429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net.

EyeWitness: A study from 1,2,3 John by Crystal Colp, Jacki Kachner, Erin Lehmann and Alice Park. We will be finishing up this study in March. A new study will be begin in April and May.

Update due to snow days...

March 3	Lesson 6
March 10	Lesson 7
March 17	Lesson 8
March 24	No class... Holy Week
March 31	Lesson 9

Women's Book Group

Tuesday, March 29 at 9:30 a.m.

Boston Girl by Anita Diamant will be the book for discussion. Please join us in the Greeting Room.

Music Ministry News from Paul Flyger

March Music

We begin this month with a large collaboration of professional and volunteer musicians. On Sunday March 6 at 4:00 p.m., we will host a hymn festival **WHEN IN OUR MUSIC: Those Who Sing Pray Twice** organized by the Southwest Michigan Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. This is a 2-day event taking place both in Kalamazoo and in St. Joseph. The festival organist, John Ourensma (Hillsdale FUMC) has been prepared eight hymns on our pipe organ. Karl Schrock, university organist from Western Michigan University will accompany Stephen Jones on trumpet and bass soloist Joseph Schreck. The First United Methodist Choir (SJ), directed by Jim Kraus will be joining our Chancel Choir, under the direction of Stephen Zork to lead the congregational hymn singing and in a special anthem during the festival. I am also preparing both a piano and an organ solo for this hymn festival. I hope you will join us in this festival about musicians and singing.

All of our music ensembles are busy working on the music they will present in church as we prepare for Easter Sunday at the end of the month. The weather has not been too kind to our Wednesday

night rehearsal schedule but I am very grateful for the good attendance we've had and look forward to more stable spring weather in the upcoming weeks.

Looking Ahead

As an outcome of the Think Young 2016 Meeting we had in January, we decided to plan an outstanding community outreach program involving our chancel choir, children's choir, and all of our bell choirs. We want to engage our younger and older musicians in a collaborative service project.

On Sunday, April 24 we will give a full music program for the worship service. This will be our in-house preview of selected pieces of music that our ensembles have prepared. Then a month later, we will take this multi-generational program to Pine Ridge on Sunday, May 15 at 3:30 p.m.

We hope to bring many of our members who are in care facilities to Pine Ridge for the concert. Volunteers are needed to serve as greeters, to help with transportation, and to serve refreshments. I hope you'll plan to be a part of this very special event.

March Music Ministry Schedule

March 6	Communion with the Chancel Choir 4:00 WHEN IN OUR MUSIC: Those Who Sing Pray Twice
March 13	Jubilate Ringers, Chancel Choir
March 20	Joyful Praise Ringers and Kids Connection Choir
March 24	6:30 Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service, organist Paul Flyger
March 27	Alleluia Ringers with Chancel Choir for EASTER Sunday

Flint Water Crisis Fundraising Challenge

How can we assist the Flint Water Crisis? The Missions and CE Boards are sponsoring a fundraiser to help our UCC church in Flint, Woodside Church, raise funds to install a "point of entry" filtration system on their building, enabling people to fill jugs and bottles at the church and reduce the enormous numbers of empty plastic bottles in Flint. The Challenge:

- Mission Board is contributing \$500
- Youth are challenged to raise \$500
- Missions will match with another \$500
- So far, **contributions total \$335.00**
- Coins/\$ go into the water jug (office)
- Bring returnable cans to church in bags
- Place outside your car as you come to worship; youth will pick them up.

Calling All High School Kids!

Deb Burkhard, Kimberly Giandilletti

Our next high school book club is March 12, 6:00 at the Burkhard's house. (2901 Thayer Drive, SJ). We will enjoy pizza, read, discuss and then go to Kelley's Bowling Alley at 8:00 for a game with the middle school kids. Kids will need money for bowling and snacks and be picked up at the bowling alley.

Please RSVP to Deb Burkhard or Kimberly Giandilletti. We had a great time last month! Friends are welcome to come!!

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

Audrey Elwell

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is in need of some donated porcelain teacups and saucers. If they need to purchase them they could only afford \$1-2 each. This sorority is having a Garden Tea event in June that requires teacups and saucers and if possible porcelain or ceramic teapots. This will be a fundraiser to help support their scholarship program.

Vacation Bible School 2016

Kelly Yeager

Vacation Bible School 2016 is called **Walk This Way** and will be held in late summer. We are in need of several volunteers. Planned dates are currently awaiting approval.

Church Library Update

Patty Nordberg, Caryl Meister, Nancy Fette

The Church Library continues... more shelves have been organized. The children's books for Easter are available. Take time to read more about the Life of Jesus.

Copies of the books that Dr. Bob has recommended are on display: *Journeys of the Muslim Nation and the Christian Church* by David W. Shenk and *The God We Can Know: Exploring the "I AM" sayings of Jesus* by Rob Fuquay.

Books by familiar authors, such as Rick Warren, Max Lucado, Phillip Yancey and others are together. We are hoping that you will explore the shelves. Any suggestions? Please contact your library volunteers.

Movie *Risen* at Celebration

Ruthann Miller

A great Lenten movie is now showing at Celebration Cinema. *Risen* follows the epic Biblical story of the Resurrection, as told through the eyes of a non-believer. Calvius, a powerful Roman Military Tribune, and his aide Lucius, are tasked with solving the mystery of what happened to Jesus in the weeks following the crucifixion, in order to disprove the rumors of a risen Messiah and prevent an uprising in Jerusalem.

Health News from Parish Nurse Jan

I received an email from our Called to Care Ministry coordinator last week requesting additional outreach to our senior members that have difficulty attending church services and church functions. This number is climbing and currently at an all-time high. I'm including this appeal in this month's Parchment article for all of First Congregational Church attendees to consider volunteering their time and talent in the upcoming months. Here is what is needed:

Called to Care Servers

There are currently many, many care needs in our church. Several members of our church family have recently transitioned into care facilities (some temporarily) and need a Called to Care visitor. Notes, calls, and visits are so important and so appreciated.

We will again be delivering Easter flowers – Beth Kenagy will contact you soon with further details. A reminder - our new portable Communion sets allow us to share Communion outside the church. Please let those you visit know about this opportunity.



If anyone requests Communion, you may contact Linda Becker, Lori Hellenga, Patty Nordberg, Carol Syles, or Beth Kenagy and we will follow up with the request.

Mark your calendars! Paul Flyger is planning an outstanding community outreach program involving our chancel choir, the children's choir, and all of our bell choirs. This multi-generational program will be held at Pine Ridge on Sunday, May 15 at 3:30. We hope to bring many of our members who are in care facilities to Pine Ridge for the concert.

Volunteers are needed to serve as greeters, to help with transportation, and to serve refreshments. I hope you'll plan to be a part of this very special event. More information to follow.

2 Corinthians 9:7

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."



March Birthdays

03 – Tom Devries
08 – Georgia Merchant
10 – Bess Miller
12 – Morgan Winsman
14 – Lloyd MacTavish
16 – Ashley Schlipp
17 – Shirley Matthias
20 – Hanna Norland
24 – Ed Atwood
25 – Lynn Bowen
26 – Ed Heiden
26 – Richard Moeckel
26 – George Parin
26 – Drew Seaman
27 – Lalee Kuball
28 – Bobbi Guertel
28 – Matilda Lutz
28 – Bill Marohn
30 – John Fetters
30 – Robert Ticknor
31 – Anson Lovellette

Salam Neighbor Film Screening

Monday, March 14, 6:30 p.m., FCC Upton Chapel

We are hosting a film screening of *Salam Neighbor* in the chapel on Monday March 14 at 6:30 p.m. This film is about two Americans who head to the edge of war, just seven miles from the Syrian border, to live among 85,000 uprooted refugees in Jordan's Za'atari camp. As the first filmmakers allowed by the United Nations to register and set up a tent inside a refugee came, Zach and Chris plunge into the heart of the world's most pressing humanitarian crisis.

From meeting Um Ali, a woman struggling to overcome personal loss and cultural barriers, to the street smart, 10-year-old Raouf, whose trauma hides just beneath his ever present smile, Zach and Chris uncover inspiring stories of individuals rallying, against all odds, to rebuild their lives and those of their neighbors.



*Love kids? Looking for a way to minister at First Congregational?
VBS planning is underway. Ask Kelly how you can help!!*

And the second is like
unto it, Thou shalt love
thy neighbor as thyself.

– Romans 8:30



WHAT OUR CHURCH IS ABOUT

Our Vision

As believers in Jesus Christ, we will be a church of vibrant Christians.

Our Mission

We welcome people to faith in Jesus Christ to:

- Discover God
- Equip one another for life
- Reach inward and outward to serve

The Invitation to Discipleship from Jesus Christ

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

We grow as disciples through these 6 practices:

- ✝ Daily Prayer
- ✝ Bible Reading
- ✝ Weekly Worship
- ✝ Generous Giving
- ✝ Selfless Serving
- ✝ Spiritual Friendships



SENIOR MINISTER

Rev. Dr. Robert "Bob" Braman

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

September thru May

9:15 a.m. Christian Discipleship

9:30 a.m. Chancel Choir

10:25 a.m. Worship

10:45 a.m. Christian Education classes

June, July, and August

9:55 a.m. Worship

Childcare available during worship.

WEDNESDAY FAMILY NIGHT

September thru April

4:00 p.m. Jubilate Ringers

5:15 p.m. Joyful Praise Ringers

5:45 p.m. Church Family Dinner

6:30 p.m. Kids Connection
Middle High Youth Group

6:30 p.m. Dr. Bob's Class

THURSDAY NIGHT

5:00 p.m. Alleluia Ringers

6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

OFFICE HOURS

Open: Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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